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COLOURED FIGURES

OF THE

BIRDS OF THE BRITISH ISLANDS.

ISSUED BY

LORD LILFORD, F.Z.S., ETC.,

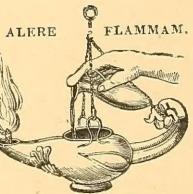
PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

PREFACE.

LONDON:

R. H. PORTER, 7 PRINCES STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE, W.

1897.



PRINTED BY TAYLOR AND FRANCIS,
RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

105. 212.34. Aug 24.

P R E F A C E.

BEING honoured by a request, from a quarter which made compliance a duty as irresistible as it was gratifying, that I should write a Preface to this work, I feel I cannot do better than give some account of its originator, who was for nearly forty-five years—though with occasional breaks—one of my most constant, and, I may add, most valued correspondents. Born in Stanhope Street, Mayfair, on the 18th of March, 1833, THOMAS LITTLETON POWYS was the eldest son of Thomas Atherton Powys, third Lord Lilford, and Mary Elizabeth, only surviving daughter of Henry Richard Fox, third Lord Holland, and Elizabeth Vassall his wife—a couple sufficiently well known to all readers of social or political history. On his father's side I need not trace his ancient ancestry further back than to Sir Thomas Powys, who in 1686 was Solicitor-General to James II., and in 1713 under Anne a Judge of the Queen's Bench, an office from which he was removed on the accession of the House of Hanover. He then retired to Lilford in Northamptonshire, an estate which, with its fine Hall (one of the best examples of Jacobean

architecture that this country can shew), he had bought a few years before, and there ended his days in 1719.

At a very early age Mr. Powys manifested that affection for animals which intensified as time went on, and this shewed itself in the way usual among schoolboys, so that at Harrow, whither he was sent, he was not only a keen collector of zoological specimens, but even kept a small menagerie, which (as he himself told me) brought him more than once into trouble with his masters. From Harrow was written his earliest published note (*Zoologist*, page 2775), and there he stayed until 1850, in which year he was placed with a tutor at Geneva, with the result that he was the first Englishman to give any information (*op. cit.* page 2968) as to the breeding of the Rose-coloured Starling, though, from what we now know, the instances of which he was told by the Curator of the Museum at that place were certainly abnormal. Early in May 1851 he left Switzerland, and was entered at Christchurch, where he speedily established a larger menagerie, which a few months later comprised examples of nearly a dozen species of Birds of Prey, beside other animals. He continued contributing notes to 'The Zoologist,' and it was one of these that, in 1852, led to our correspondence, which, though slackening at times, was kept up until his death. As became his youth, he was sanguine, and, as became his nature, unsuspecting; it must therefore not be imputed as a fault to him, that then, and even later, he accepted without hesitation much that

was told him as true but afterwards proved to be fictitious. Indeed he, for many years, stoutly defended, against my declared incredulity, the statement of a friend who professed, with some circumstance, to have taken a Shore-Lark on its nest near Exmouth *, and it was not until toward the close of his life that he mournfully owned that he had been deceived by his informant. I record this incident not only because it was the beginning of our intercourse, but because it was an early instance of his characteristic fidelity to his friends. During 1853 I had nearly a score of letters from him, but though each shews his devotion to the field-study of Bird and Beast, I am bound to say that not one contains matter of general interest, for he usually wrote in haste, and did not stay to describe his doings in Scilly, Wales, or Ireland, all of which he visited for the purpose of making personal acquaintance with their animals. In the same year too he first met the late Edward Clough Newcome, the best falconer of his day, whose example was not lost upon Mr. Powys, for he subsequently became a staunch member of the Old Hawking Club, beside keeping a falconer and many Hawks of his own. In 1854 he again passed some time in Ireland, but soon after, on the outbreak of war with Russia, the Militia was embodied, and he joined that of his county. However a barrack-life, whether in Dublin or at

* So certain was he about it, that in 1853 my late brother Edward went specially to the spot, where, it is needless to say, he did not find any Shore-Larks; but there were Rock-Pipits.

Devonport, in which places he was chiefly quartered, was hateful to him ; and as leave of absence could be often obtained, he availed himself of every opportunity thereby afforded of visiting the wilder parts, and especially the coasts, of England, Wales, and Ireland. To his regret circumstances hindered him from accompanying his regiment to the Mediterranean, whither it was sent in 1855, and toward the end of that year he gave up his commission.

In February 1856 I first met Mr. Powys, to the equal gratification, I think I may say, of each of us, as well as of our friend Mr. Newcome, then living at Hockwold Hall, where we were guests together ; and in the summer of that year Mr. Powys was able to put into execution the idea he had long cherished of an extended yacht-voyage to Southern Europe. Embarking with a friend * on the ‘Claymore,’ they touched at various ports on the coast of Spain, making some stay in the Balearic Islands, and visited Corsica and Sardinia. He wrote to me in October of that year from Cagliari, giving a long list of the birds he had seen alive or dead during the cruise. They thence sailed for Sicily, but encountering a violent gale of wind, in which the yacht received some damage, they had to put into Malta for repairs. As the execution of these needed some time, Mr. Powys betook himself to Tunis, where he passed two months, enchanted with the zoological wealth of the country and enjoying very fair sport. Thence he

* The Honourable Hercules Rowley.

proceeded to the Ionian Islands, reaching Corfu on Christmas Day 1856, and there he stayed “off and on” until July 1858, making frequent excursions for sport or natural history to the opposite coast of Epirus or Ætolia, going even so far to the northward as Montenegro. The results of this prolonged residence in those parts were communicated by him to ‘The Ibis’ for 1860—the establishment of which journal he cordially approved, joining the British Ornithologists’ Union so soon as he heard of its intended formation—and while they shew with what earnestness he entered into his pursuits, undeterred by bad weather, fatigue, or sickness, the same series of papers reveals in many a passage that delicate and admirable humour which so markedly distinguished him.

Leaving the Ionian Islands he proceeded to the Sardinian dominions, being very desirous of shooting an Ibex; but herein his hopes were mortified, for on reaching Savoy he found that but a short time before the chase of that animal had been forbidden to all but the King (Victor Emmanuel), and leave even to look at one was not to be obtained. He consequently had to content himself with Chamois, whose acquaintance he had already made in Thessaly, and subsequently with the Moufflon in Sardinia. However he was not meanwhile without compensation; for, by the beginning of 1859, he had become engaged to marry Emma Elizabeth, the very beautiful daughter of Mr. Robert William Brandling, of Low Gosforth in Northumberland, to

whom he had long been attached, and returning to England shortly after, their wedding was celebrated in the following June.

The next twelve months were passed quietly, if not at home at least not in foreign travel; but in little more than a year his hereditary enemy, the gout—which had shewn itself even while he was a schoolboy at Harrow—laid hold upon him, and confining him to the house for a time incapacitated him from the enjoyment of field-sports. Meanwhile the aviary at Lilford continued to grow, and at the end of October, 1860, he was able to write to me:—

“ I have taken to hawking, not yet with any striking result except allowing a fine Goshawk to escape. *The Zoologist* will probably present its readers with—‘ On — the keeper of — — Esq. of — Northamptonshire, shot a fine specimen of that rare bird the Golden Eagle. Its tail is long, its eyes are yellow. Mr. — the well-known taxidermist of — pronounces it to be an adult male, *etc. etc. etc.*’—and this will be my female Goshawk.”

Again at intervals he suffered from the same disease, which was destined to mar the remainder of his life: and a very severe attack supervening in the autumn of 1861, soon after the death of his father, when he succeeded to the family honours and estates, temporarily disabled him from walking. Yet he was able to attend the General Meeting of the British Ornithologists’ Union in London on the 11th of December, as well as that of 1862, which was held at Cambridge on the 7th

of October, during the Annual Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The few survivors of those who were present can hardly forget the spirit with which he entered into the proceedings of the ‘Thorough’ dinner at the Red Lion Hotel in this town, under the presidency of Professor Huxley, with Professor Kingsley as Vice-Chairman. It would be out of place here to enter into details; but the dinner was to celebrate the victory won, after a hard-fought struggle, by the adherents of the principle of Evolution over their opponents, who had manfully disputed what now proved to be an untenable position.

At the meeting of the British Ornithologists’ Union held in London on the 20th of May, 1864, Lord LILFORD not only proposed that a New Series of ‘The Ibis’ should be begun in the following year, but undertook, on its being continued in its existing form, to defray the cost of a plate in each number—a promise that was more than literally fulfilled for the rest of his life; and to that journal for 1865 he contributed an excellent sketch of the ornithology of Spain, as observed by himself in two visits, the first (as before mentioned) in 1856, and the second in the early spring in 1864, which confirmed the favourable impression he had already formed as to the country and all that belonged to it. To Englishmen Spanish Ornithology was a field almost untrodden, and its fertility came to many as a surprise; yet on the former of these visits only a few

ports had been touched, and his notes on the latter refer to little more than Andalusia and the neighbourhood of Valencia, though these districts are among the richest in the peninsula. Spain, as he subsequently wrote, had been the subject of his youthful dreams by day and night, and, after his previous agreeable experience, it was only natural that he should renew his attempt to become better acquainted with it—indeed it may be truly said that, to the end of his days, his interest in *cosas de España*, and especially its ornithology, never slackened. Accordingly in the spring of 1865 he returned thither, accompanied by Lady Lilford, and this time obtained leave to carry on his observations in the grounds of the Casa del Campo and of El Pardo—royal domains near Madrid,—as well as subsequently at Aranjuez and Sotomayor. Thence he proceeded to San Ildefonso and Segovia; but his hereditary enemy pursued him, and for a great part of the time he was unable to walk. The admirable narrative of his doings may be read, and always with delight, in ‘The Ibis’ for 1865 and 1866, and not a little contributed to his election—by acclamation it may be said—to the Presidency of the British Ornithologists’ Union, when, on the 27th of March, 1867, it was resigned by Colonel Drummond-Hay.

It has seemed advisable to dwell on these earlier days of Lord LILFORD’s career, since they must be little known to the ornithologists of the present time, and in his efforts and example he was second to none in obtaining for ‘The Ibis’ that high reputation which it

so speedily acquired and has so long sustained. His enthusiasm never flagged, as his frequent communications in later years testify; but his subsequent cruises in the Mediterranean Sea (including three more visits to his beloved Spain between 1866 and 1875), which made him familiar with almost all the parts of its coast and islands that were interesting to the ornithologist, and extended to the shores if not the interior of Cyprus, produced fewer novelties—the discovery in April 1879 of the most westerly breeding-place of Audouin's Gull being perhaps the chief of them.

These cruises did not, however, occupy the whole of his time. Each recurring shooting-season found him in this country, exercising hospitality either in his Northamptonshire home or in Scotland, where he for several years hired one of the finest deer-forests; and, though often incapacitated by gout from taking to the hills, he would listen with pleasure to his guests as they recounted the varied events of the day's work with gun, rifle, or rod; while, whenever his own condition permitted, he proved himself as "game" a stalker, and as successful, as if he had been in possession of the full use of his limbs.

With all this devotion to sport he never allowed it to interfere with the duties to which he was called by his position, and of those duties he had an exalted idea. Though he had little taste for politics, he did not neglect duly to appear in his place in Parliament, and it was with satisfaction that he used to recall his successful addition of "Owl" to the Schedule of Birds to be

protected by law in the Bill of 1880, which subsequently passed into an Act, especially as he was put to no little personal inconvenience by attending the House of Lords at that particular time. With him the protection then first accorded to Owls, a fact overlooked by many recent writers or speakers on the subject, was no question of sentiment only. He knew, and no one better, how beneficial Owls are to the farmer and the game-preserved—though the latter will hardly ever admit it.

The course of life hitherto led had been only interrupted occasionally by the malady to which he was subject, but it was rudely broken in the autumn of 1882, by the death, after a short illness, of his eldest son, who had but recently attained his majority. This loss was greatly taken to heart, and was followed within little more than a year by a still heavier blow in the death of Lady Lilford—a loss more felt now that he himself was becoming a permanent invalid, some three or four acute attacks of his insidious disease having begun to cripple his hands and feet. In all this time and under all these afflictions neither his kindness nor his cheerfulness forsook him. Both his letters and his conversation, tinged as they were with grief, evinced his natural wit and humour, brought perhaps into greater prominence than before by their contrast with words, occasionally let drop, that shewed how deeply his feelings had been stirred. Yet there was no forced pleasantry, for a man more free from affectation can scarcely have lived. The real consolation was found when some time after

he married a dear and intimate friend of his deceased wife, Clementina, daughter of the late Mr. Baillie-Hamilton, whose intense devotion to her husband for the rest of his life can be only reverently recorded and not recounted.

In his own county was organized a Natural History Society, of which he was not only the President, but the mainstay, and to its ‘Journal’ he began, in 1880, to contribute a series of papers on the Birds of Northamptonshire, which were finally republished, with many additions, in two volumes under that title only a short time before his death. The generosity with which he supported almost every scheme that made for the progress of Zoology might have been called lavish had it not been tempered by discretion. Enough to say that on a good case being made out his pecuniary help was always forthcoming, and never stinted in amount. But often he did not wait for a case to be brought to his notice, and of himself would find opportunity and the man for it. A notable instance of this subsequently happened in regard to the zoology of Cyprus, which he commissioned Dr. Henry Guillemard to investigate, with results well known to readers of ‘The Ibis.’

As before said, Lord LILFORD’s interest in all that concerned Spain never relaxed, and next to his own country his sympathies lay with that whose language he loved to study and speak. He hailed with pleasure the appearance in 1887 of the ‘Aves de España’ by Don José Arévalo, published in the Memoirs of the Royal

Academy of Sciences of Madrid. Indeed he himself had at one time planned a work on the subject, and went so far as to have some plates executed for its illustration, which (on finding that he was never likely to carry out the idea) he gave to Colonel Irby, his old friend and companion in many an expedition, that they might embellish the second and revised edition of his useful ‘Ornithology of the Straits of Gibraltar,’ in which they were published in 1895.

Long before this time, however, the scheme of the present work occurred to Lord LILFORD. He had, hanging on his walls or stored in portfolios, a number of pictures of Birds by various artists, the contemplation of which always afforded him pleasure, and even relief when racked by pain. That pleasure he thought should not be confined to himself, and he was willing to put it into the power of other lovers of Birds to possess, at a comparatively moderate cost to themselves, whatever might be the expense to him, portraits of their favourites. The help of Mr. Wolf, whose works he justly held in the highest admiration, was unhappily no longer available, but with the services of Mr. Keulemans he thought that most people might be content. Accordingly arrangements were made with that artist for a series of drawings, and the first part of the work appeared towards the end of the year 1885—the plates being chromolithographed in Berlin. As the distance of that city caused a good deal of inconvenience, trial was made

in several quarters to have them executed nearer home ; but the result was not on the whole satisfactory, so that eventually recourse was again had for the most part to the Prussian capital, and certainly there is little fault to be found with the work latterly turned out from Herr Greve's establishment. Gradually the artistic assistance of Mr. Lodge, Mr. Neale, and Mr. Thorburn was invoked, and the later portion of the work has been illustrated wholly by a faithful reproduction of beautifully finished pictures—hardly one of which is not a joy to gaze on—by the accomplished gentleman last named. As the plates were intended to be the main feature of the work, the accompanying letterpress was at first of the briefest. By degrees, however, the natural impulse to dwell upon the interesting subjects depicted grew irresistible, and in some instances particulars of the several species figured were given at considerable length, and generally from the writer's own experience.

Ever since Lilford came into his possession, its owner's love of live animals kept on developing itself. The stable-yard and adjoining courts and outhouses of the old Hall were, one after another, brought into requisition, and made to accommodate a vast assemblage of beasts, birds, and reptiles, especial care being taken to adapt their several quarters to the comfort of the inhabitants. This consideration, too often neglected by those who have the control of *vivaria*, was constantly borne in mind by Richard Cosgrave, a faithful and assiduous attendant, whose morning report on the condition

of his charges was daily expected by his master. Place was found, though at some distance from the house, for the erection of large and commodious aviaries, the tenants of which frequently testified to the suitability of their lodging by matrimonial alliances, and possibly there have been few establishments of the kind in which the captives have to such an extent been tempted to solace their imprisonment by indulging in the tender passion. After a time, too, a large piece of water in the park, with a wide border of shrubbery and turf, was securely fenced in, and in this enclosure was maintained, safe from the depredations of the well-known foxes of Northamptonshire, one of the finest collections of living Water-fowl—and especially of the Crane-family—that has ever been formed. But this was not all: round the house might be seen no small number of Birds enjoying almost absolute freedom, from the mighty Lämmmergeyer to the Little Owl, dear to Pallas Athena, of which last several pairs nested in the hollow trees of the gardens and park. Indoors were a few especial favourites, of constitution too delicate to be exposed to the weather, and among them the *Torillo*, whose deep note in the silent hours of the night would surprise the unwary visitor, who had not thought the somewhat meek-looking “ Button-Quail ” capable of uttering such a terrible sound. Of late years the aviaries at Lilford, with its beautiful gardens, became an object of great public attraction, and access to them being readily given, on at least one day in the week, the population of

the neighbouring towns and villages availed itself largely of this privilege—a privilege that year by year, through the increase of his bodily infirmities, the owner of all became less and less capable of enjoying. Yet whenever, and as often as, he could, he would be drawn in his wheeled chair to one after the other of the cages or pens, taking the closest interest in the individual history of each denizen, and shewing that personal knowledge of each that only belongs to those who have a natural love of living animals.

In the earlier years of his presiding over the British Ornithologists' Union, and when that body was comparatively small in number, not only was Lord LILFORD the friend of almost each member, but all were welcome at "The Den," as he termed some rooms he occupied in London, and especially on the evenings of the Scientific Meetings of the Zoological Society, when most of the ornithologists present would adjourn to No. 6 Tenterden Street, and there talk over their achievements and their prospects, and generally cultivate one another's friendship. That these gatherings greatly promoted the harmonious feeling which then prevailed among British ornithologists is unquestionable, and their discontinuance, owing chiefly to his inability to be present, was much to be regretted. For several years he was compelled to pass the winter at Bournemouth, and after that he was never able to leave Lilford; but wherever he was he exhibited the same patience under his affliction and the same kindly consideration for his friends



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and all about him. In 1894 the marriage of his elder surviving son, John, the present Lord Lilford, gave him great pleasure, which was increased in due time by the birth of a grandson. During the spring of 1896 he had several repeated attacks of his old malady, though none of uncommon severity; but on the 17th of June, in that year, an unexpected collapse closed the useful and blameless life of which this is a very imperfect sketch.

Though so long suffering from a painful hereditary disease, he had the compensation of a genial hereditary disposition. On the one side he was endowed with social charms like those which won for his mother's great-uncle, Charles James Fox, the love of so many friends; while on the other side to him clearly descended the characteristic, expressed by the pen of Matthew Prior, and still to be read on the monument of his paternal ancestor (the first Sir Thomas Powys of Lilford) in the transept of Thorpe Achurch, of being "possessed by a natural happiness."

Cambridge,
Christmas 1897.

A. N.